pennsylvania musician

magazine

Vol.40 #464 June 2022

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Editor Ramblings By Josh Noll

Wow, it seems like a couple of months ago but it's been 4 years since I took over the reigns of The PA Musician Magazine. I guess the saying, 'time flies when you're having fun,' rings true. That, or the older you get the faster time flies (as long as flying is involved I'm fine with it). The months just seem to be rolling by faster then I really want them to. I would like to thank each and every person who has continued to support the paper. I would really like to thank all our faithful advertisers, those who have been with us for years and also those who have just begun. Without the advertisers the paper just wouldn't be. Also to all my staff writers, who volunteer to do this month after month and put in countless hours supporting and covering local and national music. They are dedicated to the cause and hit every deadline I ask of them. Biggest thanks goes to Robin, aka Mom, who still helps making sure you get a quality product month after month. Lastly Rachel Rocks, aka 'Little Sister' who somehow continues to amaze me with her amazing time management skills, LOL.

Taking that leap 4 years ago seemed like the hardest thing in the world. With a lot of un-answered questions and absolutely no idea what I was doing, I just jumped off the ledge. Who needs a real job anyway? Somehow it has all worked out. Even through a global pandemic The PA Musician Magazine just keeps rolling on. I seem to be right where I have always been just below the surface of success trying to scratch through. Maybe one day, when the internet shuts down and the only way you can find out what's happening, is from the underground network of outlaw printers, maybe then I'll be rich. For now we will keep the presses rolling and the music flowing the best we can.

If you would have told me 4 years ago or even a year ago that Rachel Rocks, (My little sister) would be an aspiring Rock Star singing songs by 4 Non Blondes, Chris Stapleton and Guns and Roses, I would have said you got the wrong hombre my friend. 'Lo and Behold' it is true. I got the chance to catch another live edition of Staying Vertical at the Copper Pub and Grille in Harrisburg. Rachel, in typical rock diva fashion, announced it would be her final appearance so I had to attend. Don't worry people, she played another show two days later. So I'm pretty sure we will see more Staying Vertical in the future. If you see her out and about be sure to ask when her next show is. Staying Vertical is Rachel Rocks on uke and Matt Jameson on acoustic guitar. They play as a duo and also break it up for a couple of solo songs throughout the set. Watching Rachel up on stage and off stage is always a treat. If you book Staying Vertical be prepared for a party. Matt is also out on his own performing live shows in the area so be sure to check him out on facebook @ Matt Jameson Acoustic. I'm pretty sure there is a good chance you might catch Rachel Rocks at some of his shows taking selfies and singing some songs. I know every time she takes to the stage Dad is up in heaven with his uke strumming along and telling her to leave a couple bars for his lead runs. Rachel is a busy girl but hopefully she finds time to fit a couple shows in for us loyal fans. Love you Rachel! [Mom insert: I know Whitey is happy with both Josh and Rachel carrying on his music legacy, so very proud of both of them.]

I got a couple Cds mailed in this month, one of interest that I popped into the "old Pioneer" was sent in by Keith Randall. Keith has been performing for years throughout the northeast as a solo acoustic act, as well as in some popular Williamsport area bands, including Audiobox, Trip the Light, Myal Soul, and The Lost Saints. You can tell right away that Keith has put a lot of time and thought into each note that has went into his CD. As an instrumental album, he has chosen the nylon string guitar as his lead instrument. At first it is just a classic guitar, but by the end of the song it becomes the voice that leads you along, telling you an intricate story without ever saying a word. I love playing nylon string guitars as well as listening to them and Keith is a real master of the trade. Along with guitar, Keith also plays the bass and keyboards, which he has limited to piano and organ sounds. Nothing too crazy as he plans to take the show on the road and perform live in the future. His wife, Sonya accompanies him on the saxophone and violin. The end result is pretty amazing, while I never consider myself an instrumental kind of guy, I have been listening to this all day and love how the precise guitar notes lead you along, waiting for the next note to strike. Check Keith out keithrandallmusic.com he is working on a full length Cd right now so there is more to come in the future. Jim Price also reviewed Keith's cd, so be sure to read his take on it.

Well that's it for this month, lots going on this summer. The paper is full of summer events read it front to back then back to front. Make your plans now cause summer is moving fast! If you want to advertise or talk shop or ask me my sign just email joshnoll@pamusician.net. Later!

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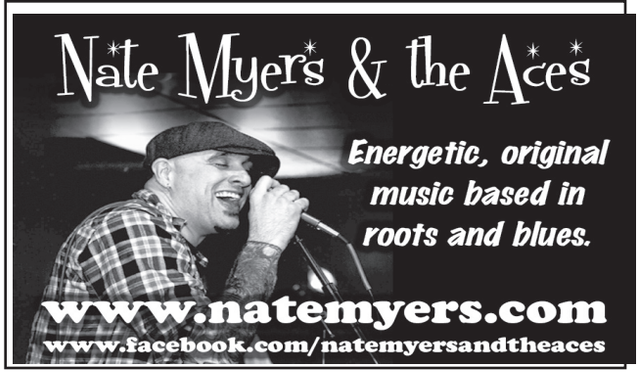

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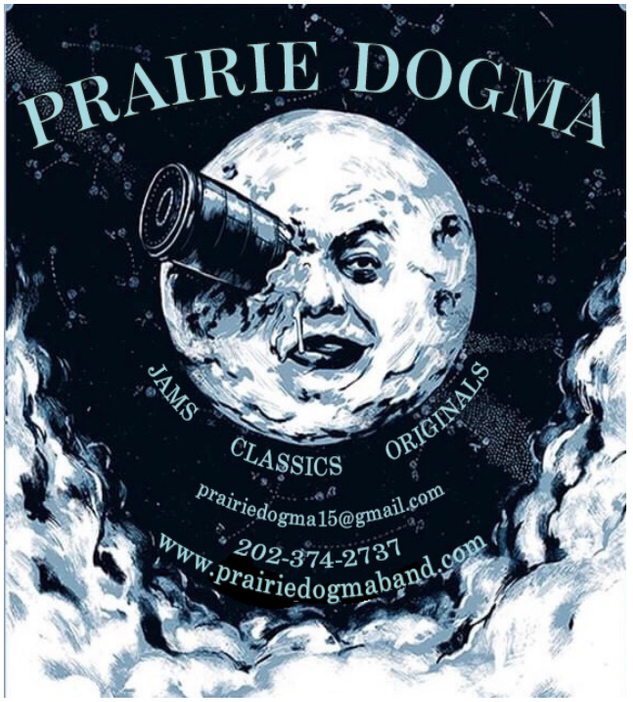

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OUT 'N' ABOUT

By Rachel Rocks

What a whirlwind of a month! Every month it is the same thing, I feel like I hardly saw any bands, and then I start to review what I did see.. Here's the list: Brotality, Voice the Chaos, Nail Bite, Living Dead Girl, Fate Destroyed, Phil Cannizarro Acoustic, Six Bar Break, Ten Ton Stone, Shine Thru the Shade, Derek Henry, Matt Jameson, Emily's Toybox, Staying Vertical, If Not For Me, Dead!, Dave Gates, Franchise Band, Little River Band, Trailer Park Ninjas, and Katz 22! Whew! I better start typing…

It all started a few weeks ago at Lovedrafts for the super special Nail Bite show. Living Dead Girl and Fate DeStroyed were touring through the area, and who would be better than Nail Bite to open for 2 rockin' bands with female lead singers. Nick from 717 Entertainment got the show all lined up and ready to rock! Local bands, Brotality and Voice the Chaos were also on the bill. As the show got closer, we heard word that Danny Wimmer Presents was going to fly in from California to do a live stream at Lovedrafts during the show. Needless to say, everyone was very excited! What an amazing opportunity for these kids! It seems like every time I scroll through my feed Nail Bite has another exciting announcement. Brotality kicked the show off. This band was formed by two brothers based on faith, love, and heavy music. Their energy immediately got the crowd pumped up. When there is a crazy line up like this one I should've known it would be an energy packed show! Brotality is releasing a new album in June, go check it out! Voice the Chaos didn't let up on the gas! I loved watching them play again. They are a local band and our paths have crossed before. Nail Bite was very pumped up for this show. Their energy was infectious and they had the crowd moshing and having a good time! It was awesome how Living Dead Girl and Fate DeStroyed both have female lead singers. It's not too often you see female fronted metal bands, but these ladies definitely don't mess around, but no one quite had a growl like Lonna from Nail Bite! Overall it was a fantastic Thursday of music!

My next night out started with Phil Cannizzaro at High Road Taproom in Walden in Mechanicsburg. High Road Taproom is a new venue. It's just a little place, but they have quite a few taps with different beers from local breweries. Phil recently released his very first single "Runaway" featuring Tyler Adkins. Phil gave us a little listen before the official release. The song is a great mix of rock/pop and will definitely be added to my playlist.

After Phil we headed across town to Springate Arcona for Six Bar Break. This is another new venue for me, and I loved it. I haven't seen Six Bar Break for a while so it was great to cross paths with them again. Six Bar Break always records their shows and then after some editing, they share the videos on their social media pages. It is a great way to get some more exposure for their music, but also allows other people to see and hear what they sound like on the various stages throughout the midstate and beyond. It's a fantastic way to promote your band. You can check out Six Bar Break's full schedule at www.sixbarbreak.com, get out there and support live music.

I guess it was the month for female fronted bands, because my next night out, I went to Big Bottom Brewery in Dillsburg for Ten Ton Stone. With so many singers in the band they can easily cover all of your hard rockin' favorites from Guns n' Roses to Alice in Chains! They were playing in the back parking lot this night for a big birthday celebration. Everyone was having so much fun, they even played til it was completely dark outside and you could barely see the band on stage! Ten Ton Stone didn't even miss a beat and just kept rockin quite literally, the night away!

After they ended we hopped down the street to Devil's Eye Brewing Company for Shine Thru the Shade. They are an acoustic duo with Andy and Kevin from Adrian Blitzer. I was shocked to hear some of the songs they covered like "What's Up" by 4 Non Blondes, but I loved every choice! It was a great way to finish off the night.

On a Wednesday night I had this month's first Derek Henry sighting at the Dillsburg VFW. They love getting Derek to play for their bike nights. I just love it since it is Wednesday live music! My weekends are so jam packed, especially now, so I will be looking for more weekday shows. If you have a weekday show, make sure and hit me up at RachelRocks@pamusician.net. It's crazy to see how many shows Derek is getting. Over Memorial Day weekend he had 5 shows, 3 on Saturday alone! I have no idea how he can sing and play for 9 hours in one day. My hand cramps up after an hour, and I only have 4 strings! Oh to be young again! You can keep an eye on Derek's schedule at facebook.com/derekhenryacoustic or through Observe the 93rd's website, www.observethe93rd.com.

On a Friday night I zoomed out to Hollywood Casino for Emily's Toybox. I love seeing those guys every chance I get. They are always so much fun! I was a bit bummed because I heard that Millhouse brought back the Saxophone. It's awesome watching him wail away on that thing! I was thrilled to see Jay Hunter from iRockRadio take a night off to party with friends. We had a blast dancing the night away to some great music performed by ETB.

Saturday was a super special day because it was my turn to be on stage again with my duo partner Matt Jameson, in our project Staying Vertical. We played at the Millerstown Pool's special event called the Sip n' Dip at the Newport Fairgrounds. Unfortunately, that was a cold and rainy Saturday, but I was thrilled that there were still some die-hards that showed up, and of course our families! One thing for sure, to be successful in music, you really have to have a strong family base, and we are truly blessed! We also had another show later in the month at Copper Pub and Grille in Linglestown. It was a beautiful night so we had the deck filled with family and friends! It was bittersweet because as it turns out, I just got a new Part Time job working with BRP Entertainment as

continued on page 10...

Brotality at Lovedrafts

Little River Band at The Meadows

Trailer Park Ninjas

Nail Bite at Lovedrafts

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Out & About continued....

an Entertainment Liaison, so therefore I will be even busier which of course takes time away from me playing music with Matt. He's still going to persevere and play on his own, you can follow him and check out his schedule at www.facebook.com/mattjamesonacoustic. Ya never know what shows I'll be home for, and every now and then you might see me up on stage to sing a song or two. Matt and I will always be friends, so I'm sure we will both make sure I continue to work on my ukulele skills. And the best part is, as I travel, my uke is small enough to fit in my suitcase! You definitely haven't seen the last of me yet.

After our show in Newport we zoomed back to Lovedrafts in Harrisburg to catch the DEAD! Show. DEAD! Is a My Chemical Romance Tribute Band. Derek is the lead singer, but he plays along with six other guys for this band. Logan, Dylan, Mitch, Evan, Greg, and Brandon. You can usually find most of these guys in some part of the Rock Mill Industries group, but it's always awesome seeing them all up on stage together rockin' out! The energy at a Dead! Show is absolutely crazy and usually includes at least a few crowd surfers and this night was no different. The show was sold out and Lovedrafts was packed, but the staff did a great job at handling us all, and overall it was an awesome night! DEAD! Usually only comes out around Halloween, so it was awesome to see them for Cinco De Mayo. They have another super show planned for XL Live around Halloween, keep your eyes out for the date.

Katz 22 at Dockside Willies

Photos by Rachel Rocks on pages 9 & 10

This year I didn't get to go to the beach with my Mom and my sister for our annual beach trip, so I decided to grab my dog Rocky and head to the Harrisburg Beach Club so at least I could see the "beach" on Mother's Day. Much to my surprise Dave Gates was there entertaining the crowd. For those that don't know The HBG Beach Club is at the end of City Island. They completely redid the old bath house into a very nice bar area, and even a private party room. Outside is filled with comfy chairs and couches and of course it is on the banks of the mighty Susquehanna River. Everyone loved Dave so much that they asked him to play an extra hour which I heard turned into an hour and a half! It was awesome seeing such a great musician get so much love from the crowd. Dave plays all over the place! When you see him out there stop by and give him a listen, you won't be disappointed.

My next weekend was my first weekend working for BRP Entertainment. I had to go work with the Little River Band at Holly Casino at the Meadows out by Pittsburgh. Meadows has a walking bridge to the Hyatt Hotel, so it was super easy and convenient to stay right at the casino. We hopped on the train from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh. The train was a super awesome experience, so relaxing! Much better than driving out thru all the unpredictable traffic and paying tolls! Friday night I decided to go check out the H Lounge and I'm glad I did because I was able to catch the Franchise Band. They are known as Pittsburgh's ultimate dance band, and they definitely live up to their reputation. They had the dance floor packed and people were having a great time dancing and singing along. The Franchise Band is filled with fantastic singers so their variety of songs they could cover was awesome too! It was an awesome night of music and a great welcome to the Pittsburgh area. Saturday was the fun filled day the arrival and set up of the Little River Band. It's pretty cool seeing all of the pieces align and seeing all of the behind the scene details. Plus the other super cool part is after the show starts, I just get to sit back and enjoy the show! Even though Wayne, the lead singer, is the only original member, they still take their harmonies very seriously for their unique sound. It's quite impressive, and they make it seem so easy! The Little River Band has been rockin' the world, one show at a time for over 40 years and they don't plan on stopping anytime soon! After we got the Little River Band back in the tour bus and on the road, I had some time to go back to the H Lounge for the Trailer Park Ninjas. They played a lot of the sing-a-long party songs that everyone loves. After a great weekend of music and fun it was time to hop back on the train and back to reality. Working for BRP Entertainment is definitely an exciting new job for me. Even though I will miss a lot from my immediate local scene I'll still be Out and About supporting live music wherever I go!

The next band for this month was Katz 22 at Dockside Willies. Dockside Willies takes a minute to get used to because they set the band up a level along a deck railing so people can see the show from either deck outside. The lower deck is more of the party area with sand under your toes and palm trees all around! I can't believe Katz 22 did their opening song as a Journey song! They definitely don't waste any time at playing all of your favorites and making sure you are thoroughly entertained. With Kathy, Rusty, and Zach all singing they can really cover an insane variety of music to keep everyone entertained and amazed. It was cool to see John Hawk back behind the kit too! Katz 22 has quite a few shows lined up for the Summer. Check out their ad in this issue and get out there and dance the night away with Katz 22!

The last act of the month was Matt Jameson Acoustic at American Legion Post 974 for their very special Memorial Day Event to honor and remember those that gave their all for our freedoms. Matt has been learning so many new songs. He's having an absolute blast back on stage and he's only getting started! Matt plays all of your favorites from the 80s, 90s, and today! It's so awesome watching him do what he loves, and that's play music! You can check out Matt's ad in this issue to see how you can get him booked at your venue or private party! You can also check out some videos at facebook.com/MattJamesonAcoustic.

Fortunately for me, but not so fortunately for Harrisburg is that I will literally be in town one weekend in the month of June. If you have weekday shows please let me know, and I'll see what I can do, RachelRocks@pamusician.net. Don't forget about the Cannabis Health Expo event in Steelton on June 4th! There are so many great shows happening all over the place. Please turn the pages of the magazine, check it all out and make your plans to get out there and Support Live Music! You can check out the full Digital Issue at www.pamusician.net.

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NATIONALS

By Eric Hoffman

Greetings Rockers 'N' Rollers! Ronnie 10/10 Younkins of KIX made his live return to the stage at Racehorse Tavern in Thomasville, PA on May 13th. His side-project band 'Blues Vultures' opened for York's 'Dirt Cheap.' A great night of great Rock 'N' Roll and Ronnie 10/10 was in great form. According to KIX last December, "Ronnie has been working hard on his rehabilitation and he is still on the long road to recovery. We love him and can't wait to welcome him back to where he belongs when he's 100% ready." KIX are playing Harrisburg XL Live on June 17th but no word whether Ronnie will play.

Rap/rock band, Limp Bizkit, brought their 'Still Sucks Tour' to the East Coast this past month and played Baltimore UMBC Arena on May 15th. An extremely fun concert loaded with hits, "Rollin" "Nookie" and "Break Stuff." Limp Bizkit's music is marked by singer Fred Durst's angry vocal delivery and guitarist Wes Borland's sonic experimentation. The band has sold over 40 million records worldwide and released their sixth studio album 'Still Sucks' in Oct 2021.

The highlight show in May was the return of Australian punk band, Amyl and the Sniffers. The incredible band returned to North America to tour their latest album, 'Comfort to Me' with 14 shows in May. Amyl and the Sniffers put on two unbelievable concerts at Philadelphia's Underground Arts on May 21st and Baltimore's Rams Head Live on May 22nd. The band recently

continued on next page....

DEADLINE for JULY 2022 issue...
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Nationals continued...

played the Late Night show with Seth Myers and will return to New York City's Terminal 5 on Sept. 23rd.

The guitar Kurt Cobain used in Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" video sold at auction for $4,550,000 to the Jim Irsay Collection. Irsay, who owns NFL team Indianapolis Colts now preserves the left-handed 1969 Fender Mustang which Cobain used in studio sessions for both Nevermind and In Utero, as well as numerous prominent Nirvana live performances.

Robert Smith of The Cure assured fans the long-awaited 14th album 'Songs Of A Lost World' will release before they tour in October Smith noted, "It'll be worth the wait. I think it's the best thing we've done. A lot of the songs are difficult to sing, and that's why it's taken me a while." The album is more than a decade in the making and will follow 2008's '4:13 Dream.'

Aerosmith announced the front man Steven Tyler has voluntarily entered a substance abuse treatment program after suffering a relapse. As a result, Aerosmith's Las Vegas residency in June and July have been cancelled. Aerosmith also stated, "Our beloved brother Steven has worked on his sobriety for many years. After foot surgery to prepare for the stage and the necessity of pain management during the process, he has recently relapsed."

Covid cancellations: Pearl Jam's current tour in support of 2020's 'Gigaton' album has been postponed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And again had to cancel two recent shows due to bassist Jeff Ament testing positive. Pearl Jam played previous gigs without drummer Matt Cameron due to his COVID situation and replaced him with a handful of drummers including original drummer Dave Krusen. Southern Culture on the Skids also cancelled their May dates due to a band member testing positive for COVID. Ironically, legendary guitarist Eric Clapton has tested positive and had to cancel two shows in Europe. Clapton recently noted for his outspoken statements regarding not playing venues with vaccine mandates and also penned an anti-vaccine protest anthem, "This Has Gotta Stop."

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs are gearing up for a massive return with the news that the art-punk trio has signed to a new record label, Secretly Canadian, and that fans can expect new music this fall – marking the band's first release in more than nine years. To ramp up the excitement, the trio has also unveiled two upcoming headline shows in NYC Forest Hills October 1st and LA Hollywood Bowl October 6th. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs will be performing throughout the UK and Australia over the summer.

Eminem, Lionel Richie, Carly Simon, Eurythmics, Duran Duran and Pat Benatar have been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, a list that also includes Dolly Parton, who initially resisted the honor. The induction ceremony will be held November 5th at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles. To be eligible, artists are required to have released their first record 25 years prior to induction. Other artists and groups that failed this year for induction are A Tribe Called Quest, Rage Against the Machine, Dionne Warwick, Beck, Kate Bush, DEVO, Fela Kuti, MC5 and the New York Dolls.

continued on next page....

Amy Taylor of Amyl and the Sniffers

Nationals continued...

Live Nation Entertainment shattered records in the first quarter of 2022, and is on track for a pandemic-busting year with more than 70 million tickets already sold for shows during the year, the company announced as it released its Q1 earnings statements May 5. "Artists are back on the road and fan demand has never been stronger, a reflection that live events remain a clear priority for consumers as our social lives restart," CEO & President Micheal Rapino said. Live Nation also noted in the primary ticketing market, that some of that pace was driven by higher ticket prices.

Lady Gaga has added a few more stops to her long-awaited "The Chromatica Ball" global stadium tour. The new dates include August 28th at Hersheypark Stadium, marking her first time performing in the city. The tour, which now features 20 shows, launches July 17th in Düsseldorf, Germany. An announcement promises "a full-scale, Lady Gaga pop show featuring fan favorite hits, and the first ever public live performances from the #1 selling, critically acclaimed, and Grammy-winning 2020 album Chromatica."

Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band return to the road in 2023 for their first tour since "The River Tour" that concluded in February 2017. They'll launch in February with a string of to-be-announced U.S. arena dates, followed by European stadium shows kicking off on April 28th in Barcelona and a second North American tour leg starting in August. "After six years, I'm looking forward to seeing our great and loyal fans next year. And I'm looking forward to once again sharing the stage with the legendary E Street Band. See you out there, next year – and beyond," Springsteen said in announcing the long-awaited return to touring.

Justin Bieber's North American "Justice World Tour," just came to a close and will now travel to over 30 countries on six continents, playing more than 125 shows from May 2022 through March 2023, and has sold in excess of 1.3 million tickets. Harry Styles announced the "Love on Tour 2022," with multi-show runs at five arenas, including 10 shows at NYC Madison Square Garden and 10 shows at LA Kia Forum.

Other major tour announcements include: Ghost with Mastodon and Spiritbox. Gorillaz will perform 20 North American shows with EARTHGANG and Jungle. Kendrick Lamar's "The Big Steppers Tour" with Baby Keem. Scorpions and Whitesnake. Stevie Nicks with Chris Stapleton and Leon Bridges. The B-52's farewell tour. And The Smashing Pumpkins and Jane's Addiction will embark on a 32-date "Spirits On Fire Tour" arena tour in October thru November.

Naomi Judd, the Kentucky-born singer of the Grammy-winning duo The Judds and mother of Wynonna and Ashley Judd, died at the age of 76. The daughters announced her death, "Today we sisters experienced a tragedy. We lost our beautiful mother to the disease of mental illness. We are shattered. We are navigating profound grief and know that as we loved her, she was loved by her public. We are in unknown territory." Naomi Judd died near Nashville, Tennessee, said a statement on behalf of her husband and fellow singer, Larry Strickland.

JUNE SHOWS: Smithereens - Harrisburg XL Live June 3rd. Tom Keifer (Cinderella) Philadelphia Keswick June 4th. Gene Loves Jezebel - Millersville Phantom Power June 7th. Anthrophobia - Mechanicsburg Lovedrafts June 7th. Jesse Malin - Lancaster Tellus 360 June 9th. Yam Yam - Harrisburg XL Live June 10th. Tom Keifer (Cinderella) Jim Thorpe Penns Peak June 10th. KIX - Harrisburg XL Live June 17th. Frank Turner / The Bronx - Silver Spring Fillmore June 18th. Midnight Oil - NYC Hammerstein Ballroom June 19th. Bouncing Souls - Baltimore Ottobar June 22nd. Rye Rye - Baltimore Ottobar June 25th. Psychedelic Furs - Harrisburg HMAC June 27th.

Matt Freedman, Writing Music that Touches Your Soul

Interview by Rachel Rocks

Matt Freedman and I met through Instagram, and I was instantly hooked when I started listening to his music. His originals definitely resonate with my soul. I'm so glad I got the chance to interview him and find out more about his musical journey.

Rachel Rocks (RR): Tell me about yourself? What made you pick up a guitar and learn to play? What has kept you playing?

Matt Freedman: Thanks to PA Musician Magazine, I'm blessed and humbled to be a part of this issue and tell my story. I'm a father of 3 girls living in PA and traveling often to Nashville to play, record and meet with my publisher/label. It's been a long road to get to this point, where we've been blessed to open for acts like Miranda Lambert, Brett Young, and so many others. I got my first guitar when I was 13, but was a drummer growing up. I have been playing in bands since middle school, and have always written songs as far back as I can remember. They weren't all good, trust me! I

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always looked at the guitar as a vehicle to tell a story. I could never really shred, but I always felt that I could capture people's attention and their emotion when I picked it up to write a song. The joy of playing, writing, and recording has kept me doing this for over 18 years.The rush you get when you come up with a great hook, melody or write that great lyric is like a drug to me. On the other side of the coin, playing live is the best release and therapy that exists on the planet. Being able to write stories about my life and have them relate to others who consume the music is the reason I do what I do.

RR: Why Country Music?

MF: I've always loved country music, and have been writing songs in this genre for about 13 years. It just seems that country and americana music have the best blend of honest lyrics, hooks and musicianship, especially working in Nashville where the best musical talent on earth resides.

RR: I saw you said you wrote 100 songs between March and December of 2020. How did you come up with so many songs?

MF: I shoot for a song a day. My day is not complete before I have the guitar in my hands and have something written. My writing process really comes from anything. It takes the full simultaneous use of all of your senses to be aware of your surroundings, to pull out the emotions of the moment and tell that story. I've written many songs with other people and enjoy that collaboration very much. My band has a number of amazing singer/songwriters in it, like Dustin Napoli, Mike Cali, Rae Radick, Matt Dorsey, as well as amazing players and musicians like Pier Giacalone, Eric Ahern, Chris Leonetti and Kevin Soffera. I've also loved working with writers from PA like Matt Gorman and Frank Viera, and many more in Nashville and around the world.

RR: You've been playing for years, but I see it seems you just started releasing music in 2021? What made you finally shoot for the stars and release your music to the world?

MF: This is my first foray into the world as a solo singer-songwriter. I honestly feel that all of the work and preparation I've put in over the years led me to this moment. I've also had to take time away from music to raise my 3 little girls, but realized during the pandemic, there is never a perfect time to do anything. You have to take control of your life and the things that really matter to you, because nobody else is going to do it for you. If you want to achieve anything you need to create it, and go earn it. I'd be nowhere without the support system and the people that have helped me along the way. I'm HUGE on the quote "Rising tides raise all ships". I try to do everything that I can to help people, because I know how difficult it can be.

RR: Any particular fan favorite songs? What's your favorite song you've ever released and why?

MF: Hah, this is a fun question. Fan favorite songs of ours are probably 2, they are "Hey Man" and "Rum Summer". "Hey Man" is about my journey growing up and playing all of those shows at the beach and people seeing me carrying a guitar around, saying things like "Hey Man, where are you playing tonight? or, Hey man, what are you drinking? The next is "Rum Summer", which became a kind of summer drinking anthem, and my Uncle Frank (who is a MAJOR supporter of this project, as well as his wife, my Aunt Sandy), burned the words RUM SUMMER into his beach chair in OBX last summer.

RR: Where do you record your music at?

MF: I work with a lot of different people to put music out, and today the recording process is not as streamlined as one would think. The best experiences I've had here in PA have been at Hopetown Sound, with Pier Giacalone. He's become a very close personal friend and is the keyboard/guitar player in my band. I've worked at probably a dozen studios in Nashville including OMNISound, Hilltop Studios and with about as many producers over the years, and all have amazing talent and stories.

RR: Where can people find your music?

MF: As of right now with the singles, mostly on streaming platforms. There is an album coming out late summer/early fall that I will press CD's and vinyl.

RR: I see that you are a full-time musician thanks to the encouragement of your wife, any advice for others who want to make the leap of faith?

MF: My wife Lindsey and I have been together for 18 years. I do have a job to support the family and music takes any minutes of the day that I have left. Of all the things I do, being a dad is #1 by far. Raising my girls is the greatest gift that I have in this life and they are the most important thing to me. I don't have a ton of advice for others, but I would say that if you have something in your gut that's telling you that you need to do something, don't ignore it. I'm not talking about money, fame, etc.. I'm talking about creating something. And if you do decide to go and pursue whatever that thing is, expect to fail. I use my past failures to fuel my ambition and to drive me to keep going, I like to say it is my competitive edge. My life's success has nothing to do with awards, accolades or fame. It has to do with my success as a father, and my relationship with GOD and my wife. Everything outside of that will take care of itself.

RR: I see that you book shows as a solo acoustic and as a band. Can you please tell me about your band members?

MF: YES!!! I am so proud of what we've done in such a short period of time, and even more-so, I'm proud of the individuals and their journeys as songwriters, musicians, producers and engineers. We have an unbelievable year coming up with festivals, tours and some amazing opportunities like CMA Fest in Nashville and others! I do tour as a solo act, a duo, trio and everything in between. I'm especially proud of what Dustin Napoli and I are building as a duo, we have been friends for 25 years, and grew up playing in the Jazz Band together in Bucks County. I'm incredibly proud of him, his commitment to this project and his amazing musicianship. The crazy thing about Dustin is that he plays guitar in our acoustic duo, but plays drums in our full band, and has played keys on stage at festivals like SXSW. Two other singer/songwriters in our band are Rae Radick and Matt Dorsey, both of whom are out of this world talents and amazing people. Rae just embarked on a leg of her solo acoustic tour. Matt Dorsey is the one person other than my wife that pushed me to go on the solo singer/songwriter journey, and forced me to get on stage in Doylestown, and almost a year later, here we are. I'm super proud of the father and family man that he is, and the musical connection we have on stage is a special one. Pier I mentioned, who owns Hopetown Sound, he's also a very technical/scientific musician, and knows every piece of gear ever created. Eric Ahern our bass player, SPEAKS bass. When he picks up the bass, it stops everybody in their tracks to listen to what he's playing. Eric is classically trained, and teaches music so he not only plays by feel, but also plays by knowing, which is foreign to me as someone who is self-taught and never had a lesson. Mike Cali is a co-writer of mine who also plays in the band. When Mike picks up a guitar, he's got that magic thing that just makes everything sound beautiful. I'm incredibly blessed to be on this journey with Mike as a songwriter. He's available 24/7 when I send him random thoughts, song ideas and voice-notes at odd hours. I've known Chris Leonetti for over 20 years, and we grew up playing in bands together in Philly and the Jersey Shore. Chris is an amazing supporter of this project, and probably nobody has had a closer front row seat to the entirety of the journey I've been on. Lastly, we have invited a new studio pro-drummer into the fold for some summer touring and we're thrilled to be working with him! He's another PA guy, named Kevin Soffera. He's an unbelievable talent both live, and in studio. We're stoked to work together!

RR: What would you say was your best or favorite show and why?

MF:My favorite full band show ever was probably the Citadel Country Spirit Festival. It was a magic experience with so many friends and family at the event and the energy there was surreal. I'd also say my favorite acoustic experience has to be at The Listening Room in Nashville, where I played a writer's round. People spend their hard earned dollars to hear the songs written by songwriters, and actually LISTEN! You can hear a pin drop in that place, and it just shows the respect that the songwriters deserve when sharing their art. It's my favorite stage in Nashville to play.

RR: I see you spend a good amount of time in Nashville and all around the Philly area into New Jersey, etc. How do people get in touch with you to book a show?

MF: DM would be the best place to get in touch - IG - @Mattfreedmanmusic If you want to follow our story, please follow on Instagram, Youtube and my website - mattfreedmanmusic.com

RR: Speaking of shows, I see the events on your website, are there any not on that list?

MF: YES - We're playing CMA Fest in Nashville this month at three different venues! I just recently was asked to do this, and it's an overwhelming thing to even say out loud. I was asked to play several of the venues both as a solo acoustic songwriter, and a few with other bands. I'll put more out on this on social media, but we're headlining one event at CMA Fest which is crazy to me. Stay tuned :)

RR: Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support?

MF: Hah! I think I've done quite a bit of this already with my wife, my kids, my parents, and the band for sure.. but I would love to thank YOU and PA Musician for the opportunity to be a part of this article! It's been such a cool experience and I Hope to do more! All of my friends, and family that are my support system here in PA are the reason that I'm doing this and I'm very grateful to be able to do what I'm doing. I would also like to shout out Marilyn Anderson from 3 Minutes Away Publishing, my publisher in Nashville! She's an incredibly gracious person and we just started working together. She's already gotten me in touch with some amazing writers and artists to begin working with.

To follow along with Matt Freedman and his musical journey, you can check out his website, www.mattfreedmanmusic.com.

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RIDER'S ON THE STORM

By Chris Rider

With June peeking in the window, I find myself facing a crazy busy month ahead between my son graduating High School (Congratulations David!), vacation, several scheduled music shows and at least one music festival/community event. Happy for outdoor music events once again, and just enjoying life as it comes. This was yet another month of incredibly good music and I consider myself lucky to be able to experience and capture just a small piece of it a moment at a time. We have a great music scene in Central PA that is not only extremely talented, but also full of people that I have come to refer to as simply "good humans". The older I get...and lately it feels like a LOT older LOL...the more I've come to value having good humans in my life. I truly appreciate you all. Ok, enough of 'Deep Thoughts With Chris', let's get on to the music, shall we?

My first trip out for this article was down to Lovedraft's Brewing in Mechanicsburg to what turned out to be PACKED house. Lovedraft's is doing a great job, along with 717 Entertainment, LLC in bringing great shows to Mechanicsburg. They bring national acts to their stage and pair them with scores of local bands, making for shows with a ton of variety. This particular show started out with my friends in Dinosaurs In Paris. The boys brought the heat to start the show with their mix of metal, rock and a little pop for flavor. They played all original music including 1 or 2 new songs like "New Spark". They absolutely killed their set. Next up was Emo-Rock band Lives Lost. Disclaimer: total coincidence, but I ended up seeing these guys not once... not twice...but three times this month! No, I'm not stalking them (and I don't think they're stalking me?), they just got themselves booked for a number of really sweet shows that the stars aligned for me to also be at LOL. Tanis and the boys brought their all original songs about life, and the tough times we all go through from time to time to the stage. The songwriting skill brought to their table, is solid! Next up was a new band for me, Central PA based Voidhidden: a six piece rock band that brought solid rock show with some psychedelic vibes mixed in occasionally that I really enjoyed. If you get a chance, they're definitely worth checking out! Fourth band on the bill was A True Calling, and hard rock band with a touch of metal that played a great set. This was their first show out in 6 years, and they did an awesome job. I hope they continue to get out and play shows, as I'm sure lots of you will enjoy seeing them. Headlining the evening was

Chestnut Grove

Rock On the Hill - AUDIOBOX

Maryland based Jimmie's Chicken Shack. I don't think anyone listening to music over the last few decades in this area has not at least heard of them. Celebrating their 30th anniversary, they played a ton of their classics as well as a few new ones off their upcoming album release. Unfortunately I did not get to catch their entire set, but as I got to catch them at a festival later in the month, I did make up for that.

My second trip out for the month was down to another favorite venue of mine in the midstate with my good friend RJ Conrad of Rascal Revival to The Englewood. This evening, Andy Mowatt and the boys in AMFM brought their unique style of music that is an awesome blend of jam, funk, blue, rock and maybe a few more. Playing all original music, Andy's lead guitar stands out with a sweet but soulful and funky sound. The band blends together to bring super tight melodies with a great rhythm. Their sound is so deep and rich that it's really hard to believe there's only five musicians on the stage.

My next trip was down to HMAC in Harrisburg for a show that I'd been anticipating since its announcement: Medusa's Disco Album Release Party. The bands chosen to support Hunter and the boys for their album release party were an absolute perfect fit for the evening. First up was a band I wasn't familiar with, Creatures Of Content. CoC is a South-Central PA based five piece, female fronted jam band with a cool sound mildly reminiscent of Jefferson Airplane. They brought a great groove with some powerful guitar licks that really started off the show in style. Next up was a band that I saw a few years ago (maybe not so coincidentally, they were playing with Medusa's Disco then, LOL), Maryland based Mojo Bozo's Electric Circus. These guys take the stage with a loud, tight funky rock with a psychedelic twist and sometimes throw in a bit of 50's/60's surfer style to create a sound with an energy that simply defies the size of the stage and room they're playing in. Third on the bill was a band I've heard a lot about, and finally got the chance to experience, Chestnut Grove. Chestnut Grove is a five piece band with several of them changing up spots on instruments throughout the show (HOW DO YOU DO THAT? LOL). They played a very polished show with a lot of talent and great stage presence that I really enjoyed. Headlining the show was our very own Medusa's Disco, celebrating the release of their new self-titled album. The boys exploded on to the stage with a few of their older songs including Freezer Burnt (one of my fav's) as well as a number of their new songs. The crowd was intense, singing and dancing along with a ton of energy and love. I picked up their cd (as well as a very useful flask!) and have to say, it's awesome. Do yourself a favor and pick it up, you won't be disappointed!

The following week I headed down to Hanover for the first annual Rock On The Hill Music Festival, dreamed of and organized by my friend Brenden Starr (an incredible musician in his own right btw). For being the first of this festival, I have to say that it was incredibly well organized. While it did have a few hiccups (what large event doesn't?), they were overcome by the awesome staff and attendees to make for a great day. Seeing as how I photographed 27 bands on 2 stages over a thirteen hour time period in temps that reached 95 degrees, it'd be impossible for me to talk about all the bands individually in a single article, but I will say this — EVERY single one did an awesome job in the heat bringing their own individual style of music to the stage for a great crowd. I saw bands there that I've been listening to for years and I saw bands there that were totally new to me and turned me into an instant fan. Please give Rock On The Hill's Facebook page a like and follow so you can be informed when next year's event is planned www.facebook.com/Rockonthehill-musicfest. I can guarantee that almost everyone will find music to enjoy. On top of all the awesome music, they had a large number of food, beer and wine vendors, and a cornhole tournament! If you'd like to see the images I captured over the course of the day (8 albums with around 240 or so total images) you can see them on my page: https://www.facebook.com/ChrisRiderPhotography/

So there it is, my month of music through my eyes and ears. Just a reminder, if you've got a show coming up that I should see, make sure to send me an invite, let me know about it. Venues, please don't hesitate to reach out to me as well. The majority of the shows that I go and shoot I find out about through invites from all of you or your friends. Hit me up on facebook: @chrisriderphotography or email: chrisriderphotography@gmail.com, stop me if you see me and say hi. Until next month...go find some live music and give them and the venue your support, they truly need it more now than they ever did.

~ All photos on pages 14 & 15 by Chris Rider Photography~

Rock On the Hill - DEFIANT

THE PROFESSOR

By Jim Price

Never would I have believed when the idea crossed my mind to risk a few pages of typing paper, a few hours of tapping keys on a typewriter (remember those?), a manila envelope and a few postage stamps to submit an Altoona area article for the June, 1987 issue of PA Musician Magazine that I would still be doing it 35 years later! But lo and behold, 35 years of doing this monthly ritual are in the books, and I kick off year 36 this month. Thanks again to Josh, Robin and the Noll family for keeping me around; and thanks to all the musicians who continue to inspire me to keep doing this thing that I do – and thanks to you, the readers, for your kind words and support!

Outdoor stages have been getting busier in recent weeks…Arts Altoona and the Penn State Altoona Sheetz Fellows presented the Blair Creators Festival in late April in and near downtown Altoona's Heritage Plaza. Previously known as StARThere, this festival featured live music and other performing arts, culinary arts, visual arts and more. The music took place in two locations, with bands performing at the Heritage Plaza railcar stage, and acoustic performers making their music near Veterans Mall. Conner Gilbert, Tom Nevers Field, Devin Sherman and The Nerves all performed prior to my arrival, and the first performer I witnessed was Martinsburg-based singer and songwriter James Grove. James did a selection of his original tunes; including such numbers as "Karma," "Dusty Road," the socially-charged "Conspiracy Blues" and "Trainwreck." Next on the railcar stage was The Pines. After finding their missing piece recently with the addition of singer Daman Mills, this group is quickly building a fan base with their vibrant takes on classic rock and hits! Daman, guitarist Logan Warner, bassist Alex Snyder and drummer Ben Brumbaugh roused the crowd with their energetic versions of classics from the Allman Brothers, Foghat, Bill Withers, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin and more. Bedford area songstress Samantha Press continued the music on the acoustic stage, showing a bright and sassy singing style as she did some of her original song creations such as "Happy Thoughts," "Lady Luck" and others. Sunset Over Mars then brought their action-packed brand of alternative rock to the railcar stage. Singer Stevey St. John, guitarist Zachary Piper, bassist Kevin Neely and drummer Nikolas Plowman blended melody-geared rock, slight touches of emo and hip-hop into their own distinctive style and sound. Among their numbers were their original song "Stereo," plus Maroon 5's "Harder to Breathe" and more. Back at the acoustic stage, Eric Delozier shared his band of folk-based sounds. He did folk favorites like John Prine's "Angel from Montgomery" and Neil Young's "Old Man," but also revealed that Blink 182's "Dammit" can be a Dylan-ish folk number as well. Rue Moyer followed him with a set of his original songs and select covers; introducing his own song creations such as "Thank You," "Northern Lights," "Take A Ride With Me" and "Midnight Train to PA, plus his version of Bruce Springsteen's "I'm On Fire." Rising Altoona rockers Sweet Desire then lit up the railcar stage with their classic-rooted hard rock sound. Singer Jordan McCaulley, guitarist Kenton Lewis, bassist Joshua Simpson and drummer Trey Boore tapped influences such as Led Zeppelin and The Doors in original song creations such as "Down Days," and also brought the thunder on their versions of Led Zeppelin's "Bring It On Home" and their Doors double-shot of "Roadhouse Blues" into "Backdoor Man." Nate Gates & Hounddog Hill then closed out the acoustic stage with their blues and folk-rooted music. With Nate on guitar and vocals and Hounddog on harmonica, the pair did several of Nate's original numbers, including "Everybody Sees the Brick Wall Comin' But Nobody's Stoppin' the Train," "Cassey," "Almost Saw the Eclipse" and more. Nate displayed some slide guitar on a few numbers, and guest James Grove joined the pair on cajon (box drum) on several numbers. Hot Fudge Mondaes then closed out the event with their high-powered modern rock. The group brought the agitation and chaos as they "put the 'fun' in 'dysfunctional,'" firing off original tunes such as "Sorrow," "It All Meant Nothing" and others. The group also did tunes from Fall Out Boy, Foo Fighters, Rage Against the Machine and more. Blair Creators Festival was a success, enabling area artists to perform and display their creations, and show visitors just how much creativity exists in the Altoona area.

The 75th annual Pennsylvania Maple Festival in Meyersdale featured live music on its Festival Park stage during the course of the festival's two weekends. During the first weekend, I got to take in the performance of Frostburg, Maryland-based trip Kamp & Kompany. Group namesake and ringleader Perry Kamp sang, plus played guitar and keys; while Rod Spiker played keys and Jamie Spiker played drums. Kamp & Kompany entertained audience members and passersby with a lively mix of classic rock and hits. Included were favorites from John Mellencamp, the Rolling Stones, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash, Lynyrd Skynyrd and others. The group also broke out a few surprises like The Four Seasons' "December, 1963 (Oh, What A Night)," Elton John's "I Don't Want to Go On With You Like That," and the Three Dog Night double-shot of "Joy to the World" and "Never Been to Spain." Perry kept it lively up front, switching between guitar and keys and maintaining an energetic stage presence and rapport with the audience. Kamp & Kompany perform throughout western Maryland, northern West Virginia and southwest Pennsylvania.

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The Professor continued....

Huntingdon celebrated their annual Mayfest during the last Saturday in April, with musical entertainment happening at several points along five blocks of Washington Street in downtown. Some of the entertainment took place at Huntingdon's newly-opened Bryan Park; I arrived as central PA's Celtic rock band, Full Kilt was under way. Singer and guitarist Mike Zerbee, bassist and singer Chris Myers, fiddle player Mandy Passmore-Ott and drummer Jake Yarnish did what they do best, throwing an Irish-flavored party that mixed rocking versions of Irish standards with Irish-geared versions of rock favorites, plus Irish pub songs, fiddle numbers and more. Mike and Chris led the audience on a clapping duel during "Whiskey in the Jar," had belly dancers gyrating on "Star of County Down" and Flogging Molly's "Devil's Dance Floor," and had audience members doing callbacks on the "Unicorn Song." I then headed up the street to catch a few songs from Mayfest regulars Dan & Galla, who again generated smiles and cheer with their versions of early rock'n'roll hits from Carl Perkins, Ricky Nelson, Del Shannon, The Tokens and Hank Williams. Performing near the Clifton 5 Theater was Bedford-based singer and songwriter Devin Sherman, who mixed original songs, roots and popular numbers. He did his folksy original song "Appalachian Wind," along with Tony Rice's "Church Street Blues," "Sitting on Top of the World," Weezer's "Say It Ain't So" and more. (I also saw Devin later this night as he performed at Juniata Brewing Company.) I then returned to Bryan Park to see loop pedal specialist The Nick Miller Project. Nick again showed his knack of generating backing loops of his percussion and guitar riffs before playing and singing along with his rhythms. Some of his songs this day included Pink Floyd's "Time," Led Zeppelin's "Ramble On," Cher's "Bang Bang," Albert King's "Born Under a Bad Sign" and more.

As part of last month's inaugural outdoor Summer Lovin' Food Truck Fest at Altoona's Pleasant Valley Recreation Center, Altoona native and former NBC-TV "The Voice" contestant Jimmy Mowery performed in the 4D's Lounge's outdoor Beer Garden. As visitors enjoyed offerings from more than 10 food trucks situated in the Recreation Center's (4D's) parking lot, many stepped over to the Beer Garden and listened as – armed with acoustic guitar – Jimmy performed a wide variety of modern and older rock, pop and country favorites, plus a few of his originals. One his own selections was "All I Want to Do"; he also honored requests and entertained with tunes from the Zac Brown Band, Green Day, Fleetwood Mac, Night Ranger, Black Crowes, Brooks & Dunn, Elvis Presley, Morgan Wallen and others. Jimmy connected a lot of his songs medley-style early on; his rhythmic style and upbeat stage presence kept the large group of onlookers content for the duration. The Summer Lovin' Food Truck Fest will happen the second and fourth Sundays of each month during the summer season.

National recording group Smile Empty Soul headlined a five-band bill last month at McGarvey's in Altoona. Local acts opened the night, starting with Negan. Singer Mike Davis, guitarists Bob Gray and Jeremy Ashurst, bassist Josh Yahner and drummer Toby Hunter cranked out the four-song entirety of their 2018 EP "Burnt Pages," along with numbers from Clutch and Audioslave. Toby drummed with the second band as well, joining singer and guitarist Brandon Kane and bassist Brad Davis in Treaties, performing their set of fast-firing, original, punk-driven rock. Philadelphia's The Stone Eye then brought their unique blend of stoner, indie and progressive-edged rock to the stage. Featuring guitarist, bassist and singer Stephen Burdick; drummer Jeremiah Berlin, guitarist, keyboardist, bassist and singer Christian Mechem and bassist Wolfgang Noll, The Stone Eye captivated the McGarvey's crowd with heavy-edged, intriguing songs with progressive arrangements, punk edginess and unpredictability. They did songs off their latest "South of the Sun" album such as "Ethereal Visions" and "Witches & Raptures." Next was Michigan-based power trio Autumn Academy, who showcased their melody-geared style of hard rock and alternative. Their songs were sharp and powerful, with strong melodies and harmonies. Currently touring as a two-member band, Smile Empty Soul finished the night with a set of their grunge-driven music. Singer, guitarist and founding member Sean Danielson and drummer Ty Del Rose generated a full-rocking sound on their set of original material. The group mixed older and newer songs; some of their numbers included "Entitled," "Silhouettes," their popular track "Bottom of the Bottle" and the newer "Bitterness and Bleach."

Hate Grenade headlined a triple-header of heavy-hitting rock and more at McGarvey's last month. SamarA launched the night

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The Professor continued....

with their intense and scathing presentation. This band is back up to speed as their newest member, frontman Eric Pensyl, has acclimated to SamarA's intense musical environment. He snarled with authority as SamarA introduced several new numbers as well as previous material. Eric, guitarists Rvg and Ryan, bassist Brian and drummer Shaun debuted apocalyptic new numbers such as "Worm" and "Unhinged," accompanied with an intense video footage backdrop. Next was something totally different, as York-based The Destruct Principle presented a haunting, visceral, musical performance art ritual. Musically, this group blended elements of industrial, tribal, gothic and black/doom metal into a dark soundscape, with electronic backdrops accented by tribal drumbeats and other percussion. Visually, The Destruct Principle pulled all stops, with candles, Native American-styled ceremonial visuals, intense costuming, video backdrops and more. With his almost shamanistic presence, singer and howler Addam Robert Paul, along with two percussionists and singers, guided the audience through their musical ritual, with the whole presentation leaving audience members standing and looking on in wonder. A very stunning set. Hate Grenade then capped the night with their explosive nu-metal set. Singer Jeff Glace, guitarist Chuck Lavera, bassist Donny Death and drummer Mike Powers pulled the pin and detonated hard-hitting tunes from their CD's to date. They ignited the crowd with numbers such as "Burn," "Vendetta," "Hollywood," "Rue," "One of a Kind" and more, plus offered their takes on two Limp Bizkit numbers to end the night.

The ArtsAltoona Center hosted its inaugural "Metal Night" last month in the facility's "Blank Canvas" area. Three bands took the stage; Altoona's Black Sun opened the night before I arrived. Johnstown's The Heathen Parade was under way as I entered the building; lead snarler and guitarist Jason Straw, bassist Jay Snyder and drummer Rik Golden scalded the walls with their pounding and intense set. They unleashed numbers such as "Diesel Jesus," "Stay Heathen," "Come Heavy," "Yes No Goodbye," "Rockstar" and "Dead Heat (for Dead Last)." The Heathen Parade was on target, and Jay uncorked some of the most malevolent bass tones I have ever heard this night! Pittsburgh's Trainwrecked finished the night with their brute force blend of speed, death, thrash metal and hardcore. Lead guitarist Eamonn Sweeney, drummer Jon Guthrie, lead vocalist Caleb Lough and bassist Alek Boggio delivered velocity and intensity as they performed original tunes such as the thrash-driven "Auditory Hallucinations," the speed assault "Red Giant," "Primal Instincts," their closer "Failure" with its grind-to-a-halt ending, plus a cover of Slipknot's "Psychosocial."

Two former members from the Flight 19 "Party Plane" have joined in a new high-flying band adventure. Now based in Ocean City, Maryland, singer Brian Thomas and drummer Paul Caracciolo II are now on board with Deviation By Design, who landed on the stage of Altoona's 4D's Lounge last month. Brian and Paul join lead guitarist and singer Jerry dPaoli and bassist Craig Short (who played bass on Kurtis Blow's 1980 debut album). Before a near-packed house, Deviation By Design played a wide mixture of rock and pop favorites by their own design, giving unique spins to their expanse of cover material. They gave a rocking kick to Chris Isaak's "Wicked Game" and a slow, bluesy treatment to Bon Jovi's "Living on a Prayer." They also broke out tunes not often heard on area stages, including Trooper's "Raise a Little Hell," Journey's "Just the Same Way," Toto's "Rosanna" and Ace Frehley's "New York Groove." Other highlights included a partial Flight 19 reunion as guitarist and singer Rogan Allen and bassist Mark Triforo joined Brian and Paul for several numbers, Jerry singing and showing his guitar prowess on the Jimi Hendrix double-shot of "The Wind Cries Mary" into "Hey Joe," and Deviation By Design introducing their power ballad original song "Shaded Eyes." And the group ended the night strong with their rendition of Prince's "Purple Rain," with guest Rogan and Jerry exchanging lead guitar solos in the song's homestretch. Deviation By Design convincingly won over this night's 4D's crowd; watch for a return visit soon. The Giants Of Science – need I say more? After more than a quarter century of doing their thing, these Giants continue to be one of this state's premier party machines – evidenced by the two shows I caught last month at the 4D's Lounge. Singer, guitarist and ringleader Mick, bassist and singer Johnny 5 (marking his birthday the first night, celebrating it both nights), keyboardist and singer Scotty B and drummer Steve fired up the dance floor both nights with their '80s-centric song mix. It's still fresh to see the dance floor quickly fill up when the Giants commence the recognizable intros to such songs as Soft Cell's "Tainted Love," Men Without Hats' "Safety Dance," Chumbawamba's "Tubthumpin,'" Violent Femmes' "Blister in the Sun" and more. And as the Giants generate a constant playful vibe, it rubs off on the audience and makes them eager to have fun as well. The Giants Of Science continue to be frequent flyers throughout the region; see them indoors and outdoors during the summer months.

I caught up with longtime Johnstown rock force Inside Out last month as they made their first appearance at the Moonshine Mine Saloon near Nanty Glo. Joining the founding Frick brothers tandem of singer Tim on lead guitar and drummer Ben were guitarist Cody Williams and fill-in bassist Dustin Helsel. As this was a new venue for the I-O crew, the group mixed things up early between hard-rocking tunes from Poison and AC/DC, a hard-edged take on Cameo's "Word Up," the Allman Brothers' "Midnight Rider" and more. Inside Out's musical trajectory picked up tempo in the next set as a lively bachelorette party contingent arrived; the group soon had them merrily dancing to numbers by Bon Jovi, John Cafferty & the Beaver Brown Band, the Killers, a country medley, a rocking version of Britney Spears' "Baby One More Time" and others. During the final set's homestretch, Inside Out filled the dance area as they did tunes from Luke Combs, Disturbed, Motley Crue, Bon Jovi and Bad Company. Inside Out will be part of Cambria County's Bike Week, performing at Cambria County Bike Fest in Ebensburg on June 24.

I made my first-ever visit to the Happy Valley Brewing Company in State College last month to enjoy some of the house's brews and live music. The Hannah Bingman Trio was nearing the end of their set of folk and folk-rock as I arrived. Hannah sang and played acoustic guitar on her own song creations, accompanied by John "JK" Kennedy on upright bass and Sean Hershey on drums. The trio wrapped up their performance with one of my favorite Hannah original songs, "Deep Water," with its theme of determination and taking on this thing called life. (Hannah and her trio will return here on June 18.) Afterward, the Donny Burns Duo – Donny and Nick Stahlman on vocals and acoustic guitars – entertained diners, beer fans and music enthusiasts with their mix of classic rock, hits and original tunes. Donny and Nick demonstrated instrumental chemistry early and often, turning Kenny Wayne Shepherd's "Blue On Black" into an intense acoustic jam, demonstrating acoustic shredding on their fiery version of Neil Young's "Rocking in the Free World," and packing punch into their take on Black Crowes' "Remedy." The pair broke out some surprises as well, such as Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire" and their night-ending spin on Earth Wind & Fire's "September." Donny and Nick's full band, Donny Burns & the 3rd Degree, will host the annual Wam Bam Mountain Jam in the mountains near Port Matilda on July 2.

After departing Happy Valley Brewing Company this night, I visited downtown State College's legendary Phyrst for the first time since before COVID-19, to see a band I haven't seen since before the pandemic, Ted McCloskey & the Hi-Fi's. Not surprisingly, this group was again jaw-droppingly good! Namesake Ted on lead guitar and vocals, singer and whistler Molly Countermine,

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bassist Rene Witzske and drummer Chris McGuire lit up the house with a wide variety of favorites – spanning classic rock and pop hits, new and classic soul, original tunes and more. Ted & the Hi-Fi's threw musical curve balls throughout the night, keeping their song selection unpredictable with everything from Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" to Franz Ferdinand's "Take Me Out" to Hall & Oates' "Rich Girl" to Modest Mouse's "Float On" to Dua Lipa's "Don't Start Now." Molly sang with ample soul, and performed with abundant gusto and sass; while Ted showed constant mastery on his six strings, often including little nuances such as the "Sultans of Swing" guitar solo during Fleetwood Mac's "Go All the Way." A big surprise this night was a reunion of Sideshow Bob alumni, as Bump Halbritter – in town this night from his current home base in Michigan – stepped up to join former Sideshow bandmate Ted and belt out voice on The Police's "Message in a Bottle" and James Taylor's "Steamroller Blues." The night's audio engineer, Roy Long, followed suit as he then joined Ted & the Hi-Fi's to sing lead on Sublime's "Santeria" and Tom Petty's "American Girl." This entire show was one big highlight, as Ted McCloskey & the Hi-Fi's again proved they are a must-see musical throwdown – see them every Friday night at the Phyrst and on other State College area stages.

The duo of Vic Rizzo and BanDANa provided the entertainment during a late April "Friday Wine Down" performance at Altoona's Oak Spring Winery. "BanDANa" – the alias of singer and guitarist Dan Myers – was under way as I arrived. Dan displayed a clear, strong voice as he did a version of Chris Stapleton/The SteelDrivers' If It Hadn't Been for Love" and his own original song "Rain." Vic, a percussionist and an audience member then joined Dan for Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire," before Vic continued the music for the rest of the way. Playing both six and 12-string acoustic guitars, Vic performed a wide variety of rock and pop classics, including a number of songs you don't often hear on live stages. Vic broke out versions of Mungo Jerry's "In the Summertime," Talking Heads' "And She Was," Paul Simon's "Me and Julio Down By the Schoolyard," Supertramp's "Give A Little Bit," Emerson Lake & Palmer's "Lucky Man," The Tremeloes' "Here Comes My Baby" and more. Vic also strung together a couple of medleys/mash-ups, merging together Neil Diamond's "Cherry Baby" with John Mellencamp's "R.O.C.K. in the U.S.A." and the Romantics' "What I Like About You," and fusing together Kid Rock's "All Summer Long" with Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama." Vic showed good vocal range and skills on both guitars, and kept the small "Friday Wine Down" audience happy for the duration.

Other performances I saw recently included Bad Luck Lover Boys' debut at the 4D's Lounge, last month's "Local Mic Night" with singers/songwriters Rue Moyer and James Eichelberger at the Spring Dam Brewing Company in Roaring Spring, and Full Kilt's monthly "Irish Session" at Molly's Pub in Altoona. (Thanks to Full Kilt for letting me sit in on bongos that night!)

News and notes…The Bedford Fair and Soaring Eagle Productions present the inaugural Bedford Bluegrass Bash on June 25-26 at the Bedford County Fairgrounds…The 18th Smoked Country Jam Bluegrass Festival happens at Quiet Oaks Campground near Cross Fork June 16-18…The JuJu Bone Blues Band and the Pennsoulvanians will donate their talents during the "Benefit for Kelly Kilgore," taking place June 12 at the D. Merl Tipton VFW Post 43 in Martinsburg; proceeds help out Kelly, a mother and grandmother currently undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer…Rising from the ashes of This Albatross is Autumn Rising, who make their official onstage debut on June 11 during the annual Patton Firemen's Jubilee in downtown Patton…After a ten-year run, Cone Of Silence is parting ways to pursue personal commitments and other musical endeavors; the group's farewell performance will be at the Acres Of Music "Summer of Love" benefit show on June 18 at the State Theatre in State College…Western PA-based rockers Black Ridge announced a changing of guitarists recently, as Matt Bortz has left the group and Joey Conner will replace him…Greg Folsom has become the new lead guitar player for eastern PA's Go Go Retro…20 years after the release of their 2002 "Your Kind Is Labeled" album, Dead Leaves has begun recording new song material…And the area music scene was saddened with the passing of well-known Johnstown jazz musician, artist and poet Frank Filia on May 17 after a battle with cancer at age 86. An upright bass player, Frank spent much of his adult life as a musician in Las Vegas. He returned to Johnstown and performed regularly over two decades at Harrigan's Cafe & Wine Deck, the Venue of Merging Arts (VOMA) and at various other musical events in the Johnstown area. He was a popular musician, entertainer and personality.

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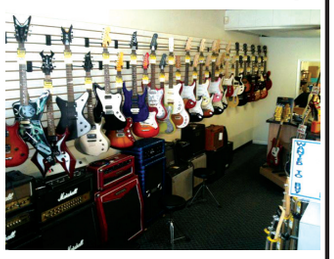

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PA MUSICIAN REVIEWS

By Jim Price

KEITH RANDALL – I FEEL IT TOO EP (no label) A Williamsport native now based in Hershey, Keith Randall honed his skills on a variety of instruments and learned music theory, plus became a composer and guitar instructor. After a health scare during the COVID-19 pandemic, Keith decided to concentrate on creating his own music, leading to his first, all-instrumental solo EP called I Feel It Too. Keith composed, recorded, mixed and mastered the EP at his own School House Sound studio in Annville; and he plays guitar, bass, piano and keys, with his wife Sonya playing alto saxophone and violin. Keith explores interesting musical frontiers over the EP's five tracks, melding together elements of classical, jazz, international, pop, rock and more. Opening the set, "Bacchanal" immediately showcases Keith's skills at blending musical styles, emerging from its serious-toned acoustic guitar intro into a busier and more boisterous blend of eastern European and jazz flavors with accents of klezmer music; a prominent drum beat and Sonya's saxophone are driving forces in this composition. Keith indulges his jazz exploration with "Lovers in the Rain," constructing a Latin-toned melody around an intriguing 13/8 time signature, with classical and Spanish-styled guitar providing the main instrumental flavoring. This leads into the acoustic-driven title track passage, "I Feel It Too," with guitar melody and nuances riding along a bass and triple drum beat rhythm. "Avalon" steps up the tempo with its merging of jazz and light pop-rock, with Keith's guitar work busily interacting with Sonya's sax and strings. The set closes with "The Hook-Up," which establishes a busy and rhythmic jazz-rock foundation (that reminds me a little of a favorite Jean-Luc Ponty number, "The Art of Happiness") that then alternates with a gentler side journey punctuated with piano and smooth-sounding saxophone. With his and Sonya's instruments doing the talking, Keith cleverly evokes a variety of moods throughout I Feel It Too, with his arrangements and instrumental nuances crafting a continuous cavalcade of vibes. The production sounds balanced, crisp and deep, and this set flows along cohesively. Keith Randall's instrumental experimentations and adventures effectively communicate his moods and feelings on I Feel It Too, a set that will convey to listeners his musical senses and moods as well. (This recording can be obtained through Keith's website, www.keithrandallmusic.com.)

STRING MACHINE – HALLELUJAH HELL YEAH (no label) String Machine began forming in the Butler area almost a decade ago, and – now seven members strong – has evolved into a prominent name on the Pittsburgh indie-rock scene. Their third album, Hallelujah Hell Yeah offers proof positive as to why this band is a rising name. String Machine merges elements of alternative rock, folk and pop into a captivating stew of sounds; featuring varying arrangements and textures, bright vocals and harmonies, and progressing, unpredictable melodies that make each song a catchy listening adventure. The group's cast – singer, primary songwriter and multi-instrumentalist David Beck (who produced the album), singer Laurel Wain, cellist Katie Morrow, drummer Nic Temple, trumpet player Ian Compton, bassist Mike Law and keyboardist Dylan Kersten – all contribute their various flavors and tones to this musical stew to keep it continually interesting. The primary lyrical theme of the album's nine songs seems to be rebounding from life's bumps and bruises, embracing the present and moving forward. Each song addresses a different aspect of that equation; the piano and trumpet-geared album-opener "Places to Hide" expresses fear of emotional pain but realizes the need to confront it, while the gentle-toned "Gales of Worry" describes riding the rough seas of emotion and despair. David cites his father for the inspiration to battle back on "Four Corners," and the backbeat-driven "Eyes Set 4 Good" sets the course for healing and reconciliation. As emotionally-driven as David's words are, the overall tone of this album is brighter, hopeful and triumphant. The melodies are solid and the arrangements keep things musically busy. The performances are vibrant, with David's and Laurel's harmonies, plus the timely elevation and descent of the instrumental layers all working in tandem to accent key moments in the melodies and lyrics. The overall mix is broad and allows all of the instruments and voices to sound clear and distinct. The result is an engaging, satisfying and ultimately uplifting album; String Machine delivers a strong and focused set with Hallelujah Hell Yeah, and sets the bar high for their art and craftsmanship. (The album can be heard and downloaded from the group's Bandcamp page and other online platforms.)

Vic Rizzo Drawing by Jim Price

ABSTENTIOUS – WITHOUT A MORAL COMPASS (no label) Young Altoona area punk rockers Abstentious formed and played their first public show in 2020, and they have since grown a following with all-ages and over-21 audiences alike. Their first full-length album, Without a Moral Compass, demonstrates the group's youthful energy and tenacity over the course of 14 tracks. Singer and bassist Noah Keller, singer and guitarist Brayden Adams and drummer Jake Hicks slam breakneck-speed punk anthems with enthusiastic reckless abandon and purpose. The guitars are loud and dirty, the drumbeats are high velocity and slamming, and both Noah and Brayden boldly sing and bark out lyrical themes of teenage anxiety, individuality, understanding the opposite sex and more. Adolescent frustrations of not having all the answers inform the words of the pop punk-leaning first song, "14 Weeks (Until March 1), while "Whatever Lets You Sleep at Night" addresses chronic complainers and attention seekers. The fast and furious "Thinkin' for You" and "Just Shut Up" both express individuality; through thinking for oneself and chasing off the noise of others' unwanted advice. Abstentious takes a darker and more serious tone with "Late Night Tokyo," addressing the frustrations of being misunderstood and not taken seriously. Noah tries to figure out the quandaries of women on "Means Well, Oh Well," while Brayden ponders the meaning of love on the spoken-word punk poem "Don't Say," which closes the album. This is exciting, no-holds-barred punk rock – Abstentious is fearless, flooring the accelerator and having fun doing it. They sing and bark with purpose, and their instrumental execution is sharp and on point, even at their fastest tempos. The album's overall production sounds clear and balanced, and gives Abstentious' frenzied attack ample firepower. Abstentious unleashes high-octane punk rock fervor on Without A Moral Compass, and delivers a rowdy, fun and action-packed set. (The album can be obtained and accessed through online digital platforms.)

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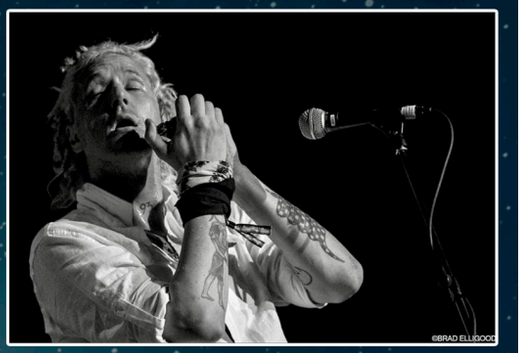

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